

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

Dec. 30, 2003

1. Iowa DNR Reminds Deer Hunters of 2004 License Requirement
2. Late Season Bird Hunting – by Joe Wilkinson [please hold this story until 1-1-04]
3. Hunters Planning to Donate Deer Should Contact Locker First
4. Late Muzzleloader Season, Cold and Lonely – by Joe Wilkinson
5. Trees and shrubs for Wildlife Habitat Available this Spring
6. Natural Resource Commission Teleconference Meeting set for Jan. 8
7. State Preserves Board to Meet Jan. 9 in Des Moines
8. Ice Fishing Report

IOWA DNR REMINDS DEER HUNTERS OF 2004 LICENSE REQUIREMENT

MAQUOKETA – Hunters planning to participate in the special late January deer season will need to purchase a 2004 general hunting license in addition to their deer permit. The special season is Jan. 11 to 19. 2003 hunting and fishing licenses expire on Jan. 10.

“The close timing on this requirement could catch a lot of hunters off guard,” said Bob Sheets, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The bonus season is being offered for the first time to further control deer numbers throughout the state.

###

LATE SEASON BIRD HUNTING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

From a twist of branches and a few dead stems, the telltale 'whirr' of quail flushing told me that I was in the right spot...but the wrong side of a clump of scrubby trees. One after another, the bobwhites burst out, flying eight or nine low, straight lines away from me.

Jane, my four-legged partner, was downwind, but a little too far back to have picked up their scent. In this tangled creek bed, surrounded by corn stubble, we were both playing dog; poking into the brush and tall grasses surrounding the ash and elm trees. No shots, but we could get to work, now.

An hour into the hunt, a single hen pheasant flushing from a roadside cedar tree was all the excitement we had mustered. Now, though, we could try to track down a single or two from the covey. Like last year, unfortunately, this late December hunt was our season's first outing. I've spent way too much time perched with my bow the last couple years and as much as she enjoys the woods, there's still no room in a tree stand for a German shorthair.

But that was past tense. Jane was in 'bird mode'. Though reminding myself that she is nearly 14 years old, I still get frustrated when Jane won't dive blindly into a bird-friendly patch of blackberry canes and brush, just because I point to it. She prefers working back and forth, just downwind of the inviting tangle. But her nose knows. With the red-hot scent of just departed quail in her nose, she had dialed up the intensity to 'red alert'. Which means, of course, I was wrong and she was right. Again.

We come across quail about once a year through this stretch of Cedar County. It's kind of rare, since quail are rarely found outside southern Iowa. On one property, the landowner has deemed them off-limits. On this farm, I try to take one or two a season...and with my lack of practice, that second one is usually safe.

Jane locked on point four more times. A quail flew. The shot was high. Another time, one had just vacated the spot, as I hopped the creek, ahead of her. The last time, the point was rock solid. Jane held as I circled a deadfall and stepped forward to flush--a cottontail. Right color. No feathers. Oh well, she's not perfect.

A few minutes later, I proved that I wasn't either. In the last 100 yards before the truck, a rustling underfoot looked like another rabbit. Until it hit the treetops, cackling. So did the rooster next to it. One more shot. One more miss. I had stepped ahead of Jane again.

Each time we hunt late in the season, I ask myself why it took so long to get out there. Now, that she has me re-educated about staying closer to her, we will return. At least one more time.

Late Season Hunters Watch for Snow, Cold

Late season hunting. You either love it or ignore it. Most hunters have packed away their shotguns well before the January 10 close of Iowa's pheasant season. Cold weather, as well as holiday distractions, are often the culprits. But that winter cold and nearly empty fields work in your favor, too.

Prime ground, tied up with waiting lists of early season hunters, is often available for the asking. Isolated patches of heavy cover are focal points now. "The birds were sitting in the heavier cover," observed Tim Thompson, wildlife biologist for the five-county Coralville unit of the Department of Natural Resources. Thompson was hunting with a friend and their two teenage sons a couple days ago, west of Iowa City. "We weren't finding them in the (knee high) brome grass. A lot of that had been knocked down earlier with wet, heavy snow. In the heavier weedy areas, they had more running room. We'd see them going out ahead of us, 100 yards away."

A few splotches of snow still dotted the hillside then: like other hunters, they will be watching the forecast over the next week, rooting for more. "(With mild conditions), the birds are wild. They've been chased all season long. It is tougher to move in close on them," Thompson laments. "If we get another fresh snow, though, it will make it interesting to go at it again."

And for those pockets of quail (basically southern Iowa) and partridge (mostly central through north and northwest Iowa), shooting doesn't end until January 31. Diehard fans of squirrel hunting have until then, too. Late season rabbit hunters have an extra day this year, until Leap Day, February 29. "For quail, you especially want to hunt close to their food sources," suggests Thompson. "Standing sorghum or open fields with some waste grain are excellent for finding quail in cold weather and snow. They feed more heavily, to maintain body heat if it turns cold."

If it ever turns cold.

###

HUNTERS PLANNING TO DONATE DEER SHOULD CONTACT LOCKER FIRST

DES MOINES – Hunters who plan to donate a deer to the Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program should contact the locker where the deer would be processed to see if the locker has any new requirements for accepting deer.

Ken Herring, with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources wildlife bureau, said the response from hunters has been better than expected, and that means more deer are being processed by the lockers. The original goal of 1,000 donated deer was met before mid-December, and estimates now are more than 1,500 deer will be given under the new program.

“I’ve spoken with the locker that processes deer for our family, and they said they will only be accepting deer that has been boned-out,” Herring said. “I think it would be wise for hunters who plan to participate in the special late season, or the late muzzleloader season to contact their locker to see how they want the deer.”

HUSH is a cooperative program of the Food Bank of Iowa, the DNR, hunters and many donors who pay for deer processing to provide venison to the needy. It does not cost hunters for the processing, but every time a hunter buys a deer permit, they can donate \$5 to help. So far, more than 3,600 such donations have been made.

###

LATE MUZZLELOADER SEASON, COLD AND LONELY

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

It was not a winter postcard scene. Remnants of crusty ice edged the remaining patches of snow last Tuesday, as I walked through the pasture to my tree stand. The west wind was blowing cold. There was little wildlife movement, even less human activity.

Welcome to Iowa’s late deer season. More than 16,000 muzzleloader hunters and a few holdover bow tag holders know there is a trade off. On one hand, the weather is often lousy. The deer have been ‘educated’ by crowds of shotgun season hunters. The upside, though, three more weeks to spend outside, with little hunter pressure; one more chance to take a whitetail. Or in this year of bountiful antlerless tags, a couple more chances.

After two hours in the stand, though, I saw nothing. Time to change locations. And strategy. “As we get into the late muzzleloader season, the deer will settle back into a more normal feeding pattern,” explains Willy Suchy, deer biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “You can go back to bow hunting tactics. Identifying food sources is the key, especially if we get some snow and colder weather.”

Waiting them out is the big variable. As I left the timber and drove down the road, I spotted six deer in the last light of day, one field over. A quarter mile away, nine more flagged at my headlights and loped to cover. It will be harder to expect one or two to wander close to those early season stands, after the pressure from shotgun season and the colder weather bunches them up.

But that’s part of the challenge, too. Finding a new field where they are feeding. Learning which routes they still use. Sticking it out in the cold. And remembering that you don’t get a second shot. That’s the attraction to longtime muzzleloader hunter Mark Wagner. “It’s that you have one shot and you have to make that one shot count,”

emphasizes Wagner; who also teaches muzzleloader shooting classes. “You really have to find the target in your sight and concentrate on that one shot. Another attraction is the history of it. In the class, we talk about the Civil War, the Revolutionary War. People used flintlocks and percussion caps then. I think much of that has been forgotten.”

Wagner, a longtime Jasper County resident who recently moved to Dubuque, is among the traditionalists who still load and fire the vintage...or vintage looking... ‘smoke poles’. The rise of modern, in-line rifles, as well as products ranging from scopes to powder pellets and sabots have created a new popularity for the sport, though, among hunters who like the extra opportunity without the complications.

The extra range offered by muzzleloading rifles in the late season is perhaps the big ‘plus’, when compared to bows or those December shotguns. As you lock in that deer’s vital zone in the cross hairs or sight bead, you still have to remember; ‘One shot. Make it good’.

There’s less chance involved; less predictability, compared to being in position as a shotgun season deer drive comes at you. If you have done your cold weather homework, though, that window of predictability widens. Your chance of being in the right place improves. “Because there is less cover and deer are concentrating around food sources, they can be really vulnerable,” reminds Suchy. “You can have some really good late season hunting.”

‘Later’ Season Provides More Hunting

Iowa’s special ‘late’ season extends deer hunting prospects beyond late muzzleloader and bow dates. The Jan. 11 to 19 season has been offered in the deer heavy southern Iowa counties for several years, but extends to all of Iowa this season. Your ‘method of take’ is expanded, too, with muzzleloaders, shotguns, bows or handguns allowed.

All deer tags for the special late season are ‘antlerless only’. Since your 2003 ‘small game’ license expires January 10, you need to have an ‘04 license in your possession. Those licenses have been available since Dec. 15.

###

TREES AND SHRUBS FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT AVAILABLE THIS SPRING

Whether you are a bird watcher, hunter or just appreciate nature, it is understood that the habitat created by trees and shrubs is critical to wildlife survival in Iowa.

“Though one tree gives some benefits, a diverse planting of trees and shrubs give the greatest benefits to the most wildlife,” said John Walkowiak, forestry bureau chief for

the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "In response to the desire of the general public to expand wildlife habitat on their own lands, the State Forest Nursery at Ames is offering low cost songbird and wildlife packets of hardy trees and shrubs for citizens to plant."

The songbird packet consists of 20 trees and shrub bareroot seedlings and is ideal for someone who has an area in their yard to devote to wildlife. The songbird packet sells for \$20 (includes shipping) and consists of 2 bur oaks, 2 white pine, 4 wild plum, 4 chokecherry, 4 gray dogwoods and 4 serviceberry plants. The Bareroot seedlings are 8 to 24 inches tall and was developed in cooperation with Audubon Iowa.

For the small acreage owner of 2 to 5 acres, three special wildlife packets of 200 trees and shrubs are available for \$90. The general wildlife packet contains 50 white spruce, 50 bur oak, 50 gray dogwood and 50 common lilac. A special turkey packet developed in cooperation with the Iowa Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation contains 50 bur oak, 50 red oak, 50 pin oak and 50 gray dogwood. A special pheasant and quail packet developed in cooperation with Iowa Pheasants Forever contains 50 redcedar, 50 wild plum, 50 ninebark and 50 gray dogwood.

To order any of these special packets contact the State Forest Nursery at Ames at 1-800-865-2477 or go on line to www.iowatreeplanting.com. The State Forest Nursery staff will confirm your order and bill you. The packets will be delivered to a central point in your county in early to mid-April.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966 or by e-mail at john.walkowiak@dnr.state.ia.us.

###

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TELECONFERENCE MEETING SET FOR JAN. 8

DES MOINES - The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet via teleconference at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 8, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Paul Christiansen, Carol Kramer, William Sullivan, Richard Francisco and Janice Marcantonio. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Construction Projects

- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting – Feb. 12, Des Moines

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

###

STATE PRESERVES BOARD TO MEET JAN. 9 IN DES MOINES

DES MOINES – The State Preserves Advisory Board of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 9 a.m., Jan. 9, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. Board members scheduled a working meeting at 1 p.m., Jan. 8, in the same room to discuss standards for admitting areas into the state preserve system. Both meetings are open to the public.

Members of the State Preserves Advisory Board are Neil Bernstein, Robin Fortney, Kathy Gourley, Laura Jackson, Scott Moats and Tim Sproul. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

A more detailed agenda is available on the Iowa DNR's website www.iowadnr.com under the State Preserves Advisory Board link on the front page.

The following is the meeting agenda.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of October Meeting
- Preserve Nomination Updates
 - Banister-McGregor Woods
 - Hartman Bluff
 - Glenwood Resource Center
 - Baylor Prairie
- Scenic Preserve Criteria Study
- Steele Prairie
- Conservation Areas and Species Richness of Amphibians and Reptiles
- Draft Request for Proposals for Fiscal Year 2004
- Friends Group
- Open Discussion
- Next Meeting

###

IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of December 30, 2003

www.state.ia.us/fish

Ice conditions vary greatly across the state, and are deteriorating with the warm weather. For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report. Ice fishing reports will be released every week while quality ice conditions exist.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: The ice fishing activity was heated this weekend on Pools 9-11 on the Mississippi River, but anglers are urged to use caution. Most places have 5 to 6 inches of ice, but watch areas with slight current, as there will be less ice. Warm weather has made many areas treacherous for angling; do not cross any areas that you are uncertain about. Bluegills and bass are biting at **Bussey Lake** on Pool 10 at Guttenberg but size is generally small. **Martelle and Joyce Lake** areas on Pool 10 at Harpers Ferry have been producing some crappies, bass and nice size bluegills. **Mud Hen Lake** also is producing some nice fish. There are good reports of a lot of bluegills being caught on Pool 10 at **Bagley Bottoms** on the Wisconsin side, and at **Cold Springs** near Ferryville, Wis. In Pool 9, bluegills, some crappie and yellow perch are being caught in **Cord Wood Lake, Bear Paw Lake** and in the **Artesian**, by New Albin. Conditions in Pools 12-15 are very questionable. It is not recommended at this time to venture onto the ice. If you must go, test the ice frequently.

Lake Delhi (Delaware): Bluegill fishing is good on jigs tipped with a wax worm. White bass and largemouth bass fishing is fair on jigs tipped with a minnow.

Delaware and Buchanan County farm ponds are producing nice catches of bluegills on jigs tipped with a wax worm. Crappie fishing is good on jigs tipped with a minnow.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at (563) 927-3276.

Northwest

Ice conditions from Storm Lake (Buena Vista) on south is considered poor. Many lakes have water on top of the ice as well as areas of open water. The best advice is to wait for colder weather.

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleye are being caught on the east side of the lake using jigs and raps. A few yellow perch are being caught on the west side at Buffalo Run and the east side off Stoney Point using jigs and wigglers or wax worms. Lots of bluegills are being caught at Angler's Bay and a few at Buffalo Run.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers looking for bluegills and crappies should fish along the weedlines in 10 to 12 feet of water in Millers Bay. Use teardrops tipped with wigglers or wax worms. Try Emerson and Smith's bays too. Yellow perch are biting in Miller's Bay and Emerson Bay. Some 20 to 27-inch northern pike are being caught in Miller's Bay using chubs.

Five Island (Palo Alto): Walleyes are being caught in the evening between the first and second island, and on the south side of the third island.

Elk Lake (Clay and Palo Alto): Walleyes and yellow perch are being caught in the narrows.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Ice conditions are poor this week. It is recommended to stay off the ice.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Clear Lake has 6 to 10 inches of ice. Caution should be used if fishing around aeration systems. Test holes should be drilled occasionally to make certain you are on good ice. Wind and warm temperatures change ice conditions rapidly. Yellow bass fishing has been fair. Yellows are being caught in the west end of the lake between the Baptist Camp and Farmers Beach. Use minnow and cut bait on jigging spoons for the best action. Try different locations until locating fish. Walleye fishing has been slow. The best time is from sunset to the early evening.

Beeds Lake (Franklin): Anglers are catching 7 to 9-inch crappies early in the morning on small minnows and ice jigs.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at (712) 336-1840.

Southwest

Ice conditions vary from poor quality in the southern part of the district to several inches of reasonably good ice in the north. However, all areas are also reporting instances of open water. Use extreme caution when venturing out on the ice. Little fishing activity on any of the area lakes, and anglers indicated overall catch was slow.

Big Creek (Polk): A few anglers are venturing out in the area near the spillway, and catching a few bluegill and crappie. However, due to the warm weather over the past week, extreme caution is advised.

Farm Ponds: Some fishing activity is taking place on farm ponds. Check the ice frequently. Some ponds have 3 to 4 inches of ice.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, contact the regional office in Lewis at (712) 769-2587.

Southeast

Due to unseasonably warm weather conditions and recent rains the ice conditions are not suitable for ice fishing in the area.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Unsafe ice.

Lake Geode (Henry): Little to no ice.

Lake Darling (Washington): One inch of rotten ice.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Unsafe ice conditions. The lake has reopened and lost most of its ice.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Unsafe ice conditions. Areas of open water.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Unsafe ice conditions. Areas of open water.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): The ice is unsafe – open water can be found around the edges in several areas with open pockets visible throughout the lake.

Pleasant Creek (Poweshiek): Caution is advised variable ice conditions on the lake.

Union Grove (Tama): Caution is advised; variable ice conditions on the lake.

Coralville (Johnson): The ice is unsafe – open water is visible on the upper end of the reservoir with open areas throughout the reservoir.

County Lakes (**Iowa** (Iowa); **Diamond** (Poweshiek); **Hannen, Rodgers** (Benton); **Kent** (Johnson); **Central** (Jones); **Otter Creek** (Tama): Have some ice but ice conditions are poor and fishing is not recommended.

Farm Ponds: Ice is marginal – some ponds have decent ice (caution is advised) while others have open water around the edges with poor ice conditions.

County Ponds: (Washington and Keokuk): Warm weekend temperatures and rains have melted the ice around the edges. The rest of the ice is rotten and will hold little to no weight.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at (319) 694-2430.

###